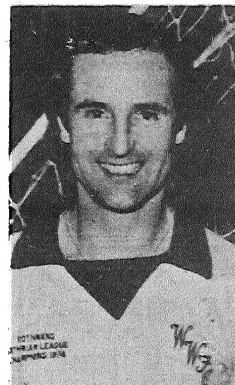


WHAT A YEAR FOR SUPERB WANDERERS!



KEITH MEAD
... consistency

JUST where do you start to review the most successful season in the history of Wycombe Wanderers Football Club?

The F.A. Cup run, the Rothmans Isthmian League title, the 50 home league games without defeat all add up to a record breaking season for the Blues. 1974-75 will long be remembered by the club, players and supporters alike.

Let's begin with the F.A. Cup. If you remember it was only due to an administration error that Wanderers had to get through their first three qualifying rounds but after struggling to beat Marlow 1-0 in the last few minutes, Wanderers overcame Milton Keynes (2-0) and Chesham United (3-1) without too much trouble. Then came Margate at home. They came the closest to breaking that Wycombe run when they hit the post in the 85th minute with the score at 2-1.

Wanderers held out and then trounced Cheltenham 3-1 in the next round. Paul Birdseye scoring a memorable goal. The prize in the second round — the fourth time Wycombe had reached that stage — was a home tie with Bournemouth. It was tailor-made. There was even the added spice of former Wanderer John Delaney playing for the Third Division club.

Nearly 8,000 gathered at Loakes Park to watch the game which Wycombe were desperately unlucky not to win at the first attempt (remember Kevin Charlton's performance in goal?). It ended at 0-0 and everyone expected a Boscombe victory at Dean Court — everyone except the players, that is.

They were trailing 1-0 early on but then 'keeper Charlton was injured and failed to appear for the second half. The effect on the defence was marked. Tony Horsemann got one back with a super goal and then Mick Holfield broke through and lashed in a shot. As luck would have it, the ball struck Steve Perrin in the face and ricocheted past John Wingate. Wanderers had done it. Not only that, they now faced Middlesbrough at home in the third round.

Never in the 90 year history of the club had the Blues been past the second round. To mark the occasion they were drawn against a club placed second in the First Division of the Football League. Everyone wanted to know Wycombe Wanderers. Press and television dubbed them the giant-killers. One man put things into perspective — manager Brian Lee. His "We've got no chance" attitude took pressure off his players and placed it firmly on the shoulders of the renowned 'Boro'.

The big day came with 10,000 capacity crowd waiting expectantly. Middlesbrough were worried, so worried in fact that they defended for virtually the entire 90 minutes. As a spectacle, the match was perhaps a little disappointing but Wycombe rightly took the praise for an extremely brave performance.

"We'll murder 'em" said Big Jack Charlton in the dressing rooms afterwards. He was wrong.

Perhaps Jack did not realise the spirit of this Wycombe team. Their courage served them well at Ayresome Park, a massive stadium packed with some 29,000 Boro fans and 1,000 travellers from High Wycombe.

The 90 minutes that followed will never be forgotten.

John Maskell, Wycombe's 'keeper had the best game of his life and held the home strikers until just 60 seconds from time. The relieved home supporters rose to the Blues. All 30,000 of them began chanting the name of Wycombe... the cup run was complete.

Rothmans, plus £12,000 from this season's cup run.

It is Lee's insistence on attacking, clean football that has brought its reward. The value of that total emphasis on skill has now been proved beyond any doubt and what's more, in the last two seasons only two players having been booked — one for shirt pulling, the other

end of the campaign, however, he has established a marvellous partnership with Mead. His display in the Cup matches were particularly memorable, and Alan had the knack of being in the right place, at the right time when danger threatened.

Another seasoned campaigner, Terry Reardon, produced some dazzling dis-

Keith Searle was playing as well as ever by the end of the season and deservedly scored the deciding goal against Dagenham. His ability in the air and excellent distribution, make him one of the best centre forwards on the circuit. Steve Perrin had a marvellous season. Watched by scouts from several pro clubs, Steve is surely destined for the Football League sooner or later.

Welshman Dylan Evans came into the side in the closing stages and soon became a favourite of the crowd behind the goal. Dylan's problem is consistency while his speed is his greatest asset.

The other members of the squad all performed well on occasions. Dave Bullock, a player who would walk into many other league sides, had a fine game in goal at Walthamstow and is still a top class centre half while Graham Mackenzie was extremely impressive in the last game against the Rest of the League. Full back Paul Griffiths, like Mackenzie, loses out on stature but both worked hard at their game and look promising for the future.

There will doubtless be comings and goings in the closing season and rumours are already rife in High Wycombe. As always, however, nothing will be definite until the players line-up for their first league match.

During the close season, Wanderers are expected to turn professional like many other clubs in the Rothmans Isthmian League. Players will be put on contract and transfer fees will become more common. Apart from that, I can't envisage many other changes to the present set-up.

End of season review by STUART EARP

How could a team follow that? Looking at the league table then, the Blues were in sixth place — no less than 16 points behind the leaders Enfield. There seemed little chance of the championship and had anyone suggested Wycombe would not lose another league match that season they would have been laughed at. But that's just what happened.

Wanderers produced an amazing burst that lasted 22 matches. It included 7-0 and 8-0 victories over Bromley, victories that were to prove vital when the last match came around against Dagenham at Loakes Park. Wycombe needed to win, preferably without conceding a goal and after 85 anxious minutes, Keith Searle snatched the vital goal to give them the title by one tenth of a goal from Enfield.

That gave the club their fourth championship in five years — an incredible record by manager Brian Lee and his assistant John Reardon. In the last two years alone they have netted the club over £3,000 in sponsorship awards from

for 'handball'. That in itself is another remarkable achievement when one looks at the penalty point totals of other clubs.

Looking at the players' performances throughout the term, one man sticks in the mind for sheer consistency alone — Keith Mead. Already an established defender when he came to Loakes Park, Keith had hardly put a foot wrong all season, dominating the aerial battles and using the ball well on the floor. It seems odd that no professional club recognised his talents a long time ago.

Goalkeeper John Maskell has enjoyed one of his best seasons in his long stay with Wanderers. His total of 21 'shut-outs' speaks for itself. On this form, John could go on forever. The full backs, Paul Birdseye and Gary Hand, both enjoyed excellent seasons. Hand made the left back spot his own with his aggressive tackling while Birdseye's overlapping contributed to many goals.

Skipper Alan Phillips took some time to get into his stride when joining the club. By the

plays in midfield. Terry has his critics but I doubt whether Wycombe would have won the title without him. His artistry in midfield carved out many openings. Howard Kennedy, a newcomer, made a different impact to the middle of the field. It was his power shooting that often brought Loakes Park to its feet in the early stages of the season and although he faded towards the end of the term, Howard went a long way to replacing last year's skipper Larry Pritchard.

The sheer speed of Mick Holfield was a joy to watch and his lightning bursts on the left brought him 12 goals. The bearded Dave Alexander proved his versatility by playing both in midfield and at full back and his work rate was always impressive.

Upfront, 'that man' Tony Horsemann once again topped the club's goalscoring charts for the umpteenth time. Although now 33, 'Bodger' showed all the old touches and magic even though he obviously lacked the pace of previous seasons. Just how will Wycombe ever replace him?

Wycombe: 51 league games without defeat

AS well as their FA Cup run and the League championship this season, Wycombe Wanderers have established an amazing home record in the Rothmans Isthmian League. You have to go back as far as November 21, 1972 to find their last league defeat.

That undefeated record stretches over two complete seasons and nine matches of 1972-73 — a total of 51 games. Of those, only 10 have been drawn.

The record includes three 7-0 victories and one 8-0 triumph while the drawn games came against Ilford 0-0, Corinthian Casuals 1-1, Tooting and Mitcham 2-2, Dulwich Hamlet 1-1, Sutton United 0-0, Walton and Hershman 2-2, Hayes 2-2, Ilford 3-3, Dulwich Hamlet 1-1 and Enfield 0-0.

About the closest Wycombe came to losing their record was in the Hayes game this season. They were trailing 0-2 in the se-

cond half but then hit back to draw. Wanderers also struggled against Tooting in '73-74, a late goal by Tony Price squaring the scores at 2-2.

This season, Dulwich Hamlet came close to winning at Loakes Park when they had a goal disallowed with the scores at 1-1.

Here's the full playing record, both Rothmans Isthmian League and other games, of Wycombe Wanderers since their last defeat by Woking on November 21, 1972.

WYCOMBE WANDERERS' UNBEATEN HOME RECORD IN LEAGUE

1972-73 SEASON
November 21, 1972: v Woking lost 1-2, v Oxford City won 1-0, v Sutton United won 3-1, v Ilford drew 0-0, v Walton and Hershman won 1-0, v Kingstonsian won 2-0, v Clapton won 1-0, v Bromley won 2-1, v Corinthian Casuals drew 1-1, v Walthamstow won 2-0.
F.N.H. OF 1972-73 SEASON.

1973-74 SEASON

Hayes won 3-0, v Barking won 5-2, v Leatherhead won 2-0, v Tooting drew 2-2, v Oxford won 1-0, v Bishop's Stortford won 2-0, v Woking won 3-2, v Dulwich drew 1-1, v St. Albans won 7-0, v Enfield won 2-1, v Clapton won 4-0, v Corinthian Casuals won 7-0, v Kingstonsian won 1-0, v Bromley won 7-0, v Sutton United drew 0-0, v Walthamstow won 3-1, v Hitchin won 2-1, v Ilford won 2-1, v Hendon won 2-0, v Walton and Hershman drew 2-2, v Leytonstone won 3-0.
END OF 1973-74 SEASON.

1974-75 SEASON

Kingstonsian won 2-0, v Slough won 1-0, v Tooting won 2-1, v Walton and Hershman won 1-0, v Hendon won 5-0, v Hayes drew 2-2, v Leatherhead won 1-0, v Oxford won 2-1, v Clapton won 2-1, v Ilford drew 3-3, v Walthamstow won 1-0, v Sutton United won 3-2, v Hitchin won 2-0, v Leytonstone won 5-1, v Woking won 3-0, v Dulwich Hamlet drew 1-1, v Woking won 5-1, v Bromley won 2-0, v Enfield drew 0-0, v Bishop's Stortford won 3-0, v Dagenham won 1-0.

Overall Isthmian League record since November 21st 1972: Played 51, won 41, drawn 10, lost 0, goals for 128, goals against 34.

OTHER GAMES AT LOAKES PARK

Woking Nov. 21 1972 lost 1-2, v Loughborough Coll (F) won 3-1, v Carnegie Coll (F) lost 2-3, v Chesham (FAC) lost 0-1, v Banbury (PMFL) won 8-0, v Wokingham (PMFL) won 4-0, v Chesham (PMFL) won 4-0, v Marlow (PMFL) won 3-0, v Chalfont St. Peter (B and B) won 9-0, v Chelsea (F) drew 1-1, v Feltham (F) won 3-0, v Bracknell (B and B) won 1-0, v QPR (F) won 4-1, v Bournemouth Youth (F) won 10-0, v Southall (F) won 3-0, v Willington (F) won 2-1, v Horsham (PMFL) won 3-0, v International Club (F) won 3-0, v Bournemouth (F) won 2-1.
END OF 1972-73 SEASON.

1973-74 SEASON

Atherstone (F) won 3-1, v North Shields (F) won 7-0, v Oxford United lost 0-2, v Wokingham (PMFL) won 4-1, v Woking (FAC) won 1-0, v Maidenhead (PMFL) drew 2-2, v Newport County (FAC) won 3-1, v Aveley (F) drew 2-2, v Peterborough United lost 1-3, v Hornchurch (AC) won 5-0, v Chesham (PMFL) drew 1-1, v Banbury (PMFL) won 4-2, v Cowden (F) won 5-1, v Cheltenham (F) drew 1-1, v Marlow (PMFL) won 1-0.
END OF 1973-74 SEASON.

1974-75 SEASON
Oxford United (F) won 2-1, v Wimbledon (F) lost 1-2, v Witley (F) won 4-0, v Molesey (F) won 4-0, v Hungerford (F) drew 1-1, v Milton Keynes (FAC) won 2-0, v Oxford University (F) won 5-0, v Margate (FAC) won 2-1, v Stevenage (F) drew 0-0, v Loughborough College (F) won 3-0, v Cheltenham (FAC) won 3-1, v Swindon (F) won 4-1, v Basingstoke (F) drew 3-3, v Bournemouth (FAC) drew 0-0, v Watford (F) won 1-0, v Middlesbrough (FAC) drew 0-0, v Letchworth (F) won 4-0, v Cheltenham (F) won 3-0, v Viking Stavanger (F) won 2-1, v Chelsea (F) drew 0-0, v Chicago Sting (F) lost 1-4, v Southend (F) won 6-1, v Rest of League (Rep) won 4-3.
Other matches record since November 21, 1972: Played 56, won 39, drawn 11, lost 6, goals for 164, goals against 45.
Total record since November 21, 1972: Played 107, won 80, drawn 21, lost 6, goals for 392, goals against 79.